



United States Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management
3170 East Main Street
Cañon City, Colorado 81212



FRONT RANGE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING CANON CITY, COLORADO November 15, 2006

MINUTES

ATTENDEES

GROUP 1

Virginia Patton
Jim Coleman
Gene King
Keary Hallack

GROUP 2

Donna Murphy
Aaron Clark
Tom Olson
Frank Yeager
Lucy Bambrey

GROUP 3

Francis Matthews
Michael Bush
Loren Whittemore
Al Trujillo

GUESTS: B.J. Jones, Senator Allard's office, SeEtta Moss, Arkansas Valley Audubon Society; Tom Purvis, Salida Mountain Trails, Greg Mihalk, Salida, Cliff Tucker, Dave Kemper.

BLM/USFS PERSONNEL: Roy Masinton, Linda McGlothlen, Jim Rhett, Jan Lownes, Ken Smith, Cindy Giles, Paul Trentzsch, Leah Quesenberry, Jack Hagan, Erik Brekke, Dave Gilbert, John Nahomenuk.

PUBLIC COMMENT: **SeEtta Moss**, Arkansas Valley Audubon Society, does not want the Lesser Prairie Chicken to be in a position where it needs to be listed as an Endangered Species, because that brings more restrictions. Since 1991, the population has been declining because of disturbance of their habitat, particularly from the development of Oil and Gas wells. The wells, the noise, the roads are all a disturbance factor. SeEtta was particularly concerned about the Comanche National Grasslands in Baca County.

Roy explained the application and leasing process and that an Environmental Analysis is done before permission is given to drill. To Roy's knowledge, BLM has not received any Applications for Permit to Drill in this area.

Tom Purvis from Salida Mountain Trails commented about the Salida subunit of the Arkansas River Travel Management Plan. The area has a history of illicit trail building that BLM has been concerned about. Currently the trails are rugged and difficult with erosion and drainage problems. They have reviewed the alternatives and are pleased with the way BLM is handling the existing trails. However, there is some ambiguity with the new trails shown in the draft TMP. The Club would like to create a wider variety of trails that are stacked – easier trails closer to town and harder trails further away. They asked the RAC and BLM to consider their plan and believe if the demand for trails is not met, more illicit trails will be built. The group would be willing to help maintain trails in this area.

Questions and discussion from the RAC were entertained. Roy encouraged the group to pursue their goal, and explained that BLM is willing to partner with organizations that can responsibly manage trails. Al Trujillo encouraged the group to discuss these issues with all the agencies involved in a possible partnership, the Division of Wildlife is another suggested agency to pursue.

COUNCIL BUSINESS: Roy stated that Barb Sharrow, Montrose Field Manager, is working with the Colorado State University Extension Office in Delta to put on an optional statewide training for RAC members on “Landscape Health”. There are no specifics yet, but it would probably be one or two days in January, February or March and hopefully be located somewhere central to all three RACs. The training the Extension Office has done in the past has focused on basic rangeland health, but also included recreation and other resources. The Council will be advised as information is finalized.

MANAGERS UPDATE:

San Luis Valley Issues; Jim Rhett: Jim asked if there are any San Luis Valley (SLV) issues the Council would like to discuss at future meetings. Aaron Clark asked about the status of the SLV Travel Management Plan. Jim stated that they don’t envision much change, and that they are very close to developing a draft.

Jim was asked about the Wind and Solar energy developments that are proposed for the SLV. Keary Hallack stated that she could bring some information to the next RAC meeting. The RAC also asked for an update on the Wolf Creek Ski area. Jim stated that they found what they thought would be the best access area. There has been some litigation and clarifications have been requested.

Roy Masinton, Royal Gorge Field Manager:

Recreation RACs: The U.S. Forest Service did not get a lot of nominees in three of the five categories, so they are still taking nominations. Tentatively they are planning to select the members during the first or second week of December. A total of 11 members will serve on each Recreation RAC. Gene King has applied from the Front Range RAC.

Salida Ditch Update: Although the Company has settled the damage to resources by completing restoration, they have not applied for a right-of-way to authorize the work they have done outside the originally disturbed area, some of which they will continue to need. If BLM does not hear something soon we intend to send a formal trespass decision including a substantial bill for administrative costs incurred by the BLM up to this point in time.

Over the River Proposal: Roy explained that they have been asked to submit a detailed Design Proposal. Following receipt of this Proposal, BLM will select a contractor to do the EIS through the competitive bid process.

Browns Canyon wilderness update: There is considerable support for this area being designated as Wilderness, however the National Rifle Association and Congressman elect, Lamborn are opposed. The NRA believes it will limit access to the area for hunters. It appears the NRA may have been misinformed about some things, and there are some misunderstandings. There is still a chance the legislation could be passed this year. Congressman Hefley and Senator Allard are sponsors of the bill and it is supported by Senator Salazar.

Preauthorization for three retardant drops in Counties: The Bureau of Land Management is interested in having preauthorization from several Counties to order reimbursable resources, specifically Single Engine Airtankers for initial attack incidents on private lands. This would only be necessary when a qualified federal Initial Attack Incident Commander is first on scene.

Under the Colorado State Forest Service Wildfire Emergency Response Fund, there is no cost to the County for the first load of retardant delivered. BLM is requesting preauthorization for up to two additional loads, which would be at the County's expense, but only when fire potential warrants. In these situations, every attempt will be made to advise the County Sheriff and County Commissioners. The purpose of the agreement would be to stop small fires, before they become large, dangerous and costly. Of the six Counties contacted, all were supportive of the concept, except the Fremont County Sheriff is concerned about the agreements impact on his budget.

Status of resolutions passed in the last 12 months:

- 1/25/06 -Proposal to implement statewide SRP application, renewal and transfer fees. *Status – implemented.*
- 3/15/06 -Need for implementation of the draft remediation plan for the “clean up” of the mill tailings at Millsap Gulch south of Victor. *Status - continuing to try and acquire funding.*
- 3/15/06 -Need for additional Law Enforcement presence in the RGFO area. *Status – waiting for funding and position approval.*
- 5/11/06 -Management of trials events areas and trials bike practice areas on public lands in RGFO. *Status – included in Travel Management Plan*
- 5/11/06 -Proposal to implement Guidelines for Managing Access between BLM and private lands in the RGFO. *Status - implemented*
- 7/27/06 -Recommendation about the establishment of a Recreation Resource Advisory Council. *Status – recommendation that one RAC member serve as a liaison with the RRAC to provide communications between the two Councils, was forwarded through the State Director. Result – RAC members can apply and will be considered but not guaranteed a position. Gene King has applied.*

RAC meeting dates:

Historically during the fall, issues to bring to the Council are less than other times of the year. It was suggested, if that is the case in 2007, the September and November meetings be combined and held in October. Tuesday, October 9, 2007 was selected.

Mark Heath Access Issue, Jan Lownes, John Smeins and Dave Toelle :

Jan explained, the landowner Mark Heath, bought some property on a hillside in Boulder County with no access and wants to build a home. He has acquired access through about two thirds of a mile across adjoining private properties by taking them to court. He still needs access through short intermittent parcels of BLM managed public land. The area proposed for the road is steep and would have significant impacts from erosion causing problems in local drainages. The width of the road would have a considerable impact on the amount of sediment and runoff. In addition, fire trucks would not be able to get to the area and if there were a wildfire, escape from the home would be limited or nonexistent because of the steep terrain. This would pose a safety problem to firefighters. While BLM will give him access, we are not required to provide the 40 foot right of way he has

requested. The decision in the EA provides for a 3 foot wide right of way to access to the proposed house. A decision by an Administrative Law Judge is expected in January, 2007.

LUNCH

Election of Officers

Loren Whittemore was re-elected Chairman and Michael Bush was re-elected Vice Chairman.

Rio Grande Natural Area Act, Jim Rhett: Legislation passed, designating a ¼ mile corridor from either side of the bank of the Rio Grande from the southern boundary of the Alamosa Wildlife Refuge to the New Mexico state border, as a Natural Area. A plan will be developed for management of the corridor. There is not much recreational use in this area, it will primarily be managed for vegetation and wildlife. Jim will have more information at the January meeting.

Arkansas River Travel Management Plan Workshop, Dave Walker:

Using maps in PowerPoint, there was discussion including RAC members and public attending the meeting, about the Alternatives, subunits and the plan in general. There were several comments and recommendations discussed:

- *Could BLM assign names to the alternatives based on the recreational niche or types of recreation experiences that would be emphasized rather than on intensities of use.* The terms “High Use”, “Moderate Use”, and “Low Use” were intended to reflect the relative amounts of motorized (OHV) uses that would be accommodated under each of the alternatives. The terms were also meant to characterize the relative amounts of OHV use when viewed over the entire TMP area.
- *There are very few trails designated to hiking only.* Since the need for trails exclusively for hiking was not identified during the scoping process it was not identified as a priority. All of the trails were proposed as non-motorized trails that would be available to hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians.
- *The 100-foot rule for parking, camping, and game retrieval – BLM should consider adopting the same policies that are being proposed by the Forest Service who does not have a 100 foot rule.* The purpose of the 100-foot rule is to reduce the potential for the proliferation of new routes while also providing reasonable opportunities for parking and camping. Since the 100-foot rule has been in effect, no significant increase in user created routes has been noticed. Because the 100-foot rule has been implemented in the Gold Belt Travel Management Plan, precedence exists for adopting the 100-foot rule in other Travel Management Plans within the Royal Gorge Field Office.
- *No seasonal closures for wildlife protection were included in any of the Travel Management Plan alternatives and should be given more consideration as a means for mitigating impacts to wildlife.*
- *Descriptions of Travel Use Categories fail to recognize the multiple uses that are permitted in a particular category and may not satisfy the desired experiences of all of the types of users that are included in the category.* In designating trails, the ID team used a route designation system that identified routes according to permitted uses under six travel use categories; Foot,

Equestrian, Bicycle, Motorcycle, ATV, and General. This system was used because it conforms to the travel management signing standards which are used by all of the land management agencies in Colorado.

- *How would Designated Future Conditions be achieved when the numbers and miles of routes increase? (This question was raised during discussions about the additional trails that are proposed in the Texas Creek subunit and pertained specifically to the DFCs for improving watershed and wildlife conditions.)* Although additional trails would increase potential erosion and conflicts with wildlife, these impacts could be mitigated by proper design of new trails, rerouting and reconstruction of old closed trails to minimize erosion, and implementing seasonal closures to avoid conflicts with wildlife.

Dave said BLM will further consider the topics discussed as they may apply to the Arkansas River Travel Management Plan and travel management planning in general.

The next meeting is January 25, 2007

Loren Whittemore adjourned the meeting.

Roy L. Masinton
Royal Gorge Field Manager
Bureau of Land Management

Loren R. Whittemore
Chairman
Front Range Resource Advisory Council